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U.S. hidden hand pushes Ossetia war

By Sara Flounders

Aug. 13—Long before Aug. 8, when the leaders of Georgia, a country in the Caucasus Mountains south of Russia, attacked a small autonomous region known as South Ossetia, the U.S. military was deeply involved in Georgia. Washington is no innocent bystander in this bloody struggle, which provoked a response by Russia that now dominates the news.

Georgia's well-organized and massive military assault set the city of Tskhinvali, South Ossetia's capital, aflame within hours, destroying the parliament building, the university and the main hospital. According to AP interviews with survivors, there was hardly a single building left undamaged. Eduard Kokoity, the South Ossetian leader, estimated that more than 1,400 civilians were killed in the assault. (Reuters, Aug. 8)

Russian military forces then struck back at Georgia's military bases, airfields and the main Black Sea port of Poti. Most news coverage in the West, however, is slanted to give the impression that Russia initiated the conflict with Georgia.

Many of the hundreds of recent articles detail the significance of Georgia as a strategic transit point for oil and gas from the Caspian Sea. But what connection this conflict may have to other U.S. maneuvers in this strategic region is barely mentioned.

Even as Russia is preoccupied with a war on its border and world attention is focused on South Ossetia, the Bush administration has sent two additional U.S. Navy carrier groups to the seas around Iran.

U.S. armed, trained Georgia's army

Washington does not claim credit for the invasion of South Ossetia ordered by Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, especially now that his forces have been routed. The roads back to the Georgian capital of Tbilisi are littered with tanks and other military vehicles abandoned by Georgian soldiers in their mad scramble to return home. (BBC News, Aug. 12)



But at the time of the invasion, the White House made clear its political support for Saakashvili and Georgia has been closely allied with the U.S. military in its war in Iraq.

The U.S. and NATO have heavily armed and trained the Georgian military. There are U.S. military "advisers" in Georgia today. A thousand U.S. Marines from the Third Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment just finished three weeks of joint maneuvers there called "Operation Immediate Response."

U.S. imperialism & Caspian oil

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In the period leading up to Georgia's attack on South Ossetia, the Pentagon had supplied Georgia with hundreds of tanks, armored vehicles, artillery weapons, rocket launchers and dozens of combat helicopters and anti-aircraft missile systems. Hundreds of other weapons systems have poured in from other NATO members and from Israel. (Interfax, Aug. 7)

In exchange Georgia had provided the third-largest military force in the U.S. occupation of Iraq. But on Aug. 10 the U.S. began ferrying the 2,000 Georgian troops out of Iraq to the war zone in Georgia.

Along with the "advisers" and U.S. troops sent for maneuvers, U.S.-origin mercenaries and privatized military trainers function in Georgia. Tens of thousands of "civil society" operatives, international consultants, policy experts and technical assistants operate in Georgia, Ukraine and other former Soviet Republics.

NATO divided over Georgia

NATO, a U.S.-dominated alliance of imperialist military powers, has been divided over Washington's demands for expansion. The April 2-4 NATO summit in Bucharest, Romania, nearly broke up over Washington's provocative proposals.

The U.S. demanded further expansion of NATO eastward to include Ukraine and Georgia, two countries that were once part of the Soviet Union and that both border Russia. Despite

Continued on page 10



Texas executions break int'l law

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Above, James Wood's family and supporters rally at Alamo in San Antonio to protest his impending execution. Right, Chi's mother and cousin just after the Honduran's execution in Huntsville.

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Behind the bio-terrorism case Spores came from U.S. weapons labs

By Hillel Cohen

Last week a Justice Department spokesperson announced that the anthrax case of 2001 was closed following the suicide of Dr. Bruce Ivins, who the Justice Department and the FBI now claim was the sole perpetrator. Dr. Ivins' attorney as well as family and friends deny the charges. Whether or not Dr. Ivins was involved in the anthrax release remains to be seen. No one should jump to the conclusion that Dr. Ivins' suicide was an admission of guilt.

No indictment had been made prior to Ivins' suicide. One can only speculate whether his death has given the government the opportunity to claim the case is closed, by focusing charges on a dead man who cannot defend himself in court and who cannot reveal what has been going on behind the closed doors of the military biological weapons lab where he worked until his death.

Shortly after the 9-11 attacks, weaponized anthrax spores were mailed to Senate Democrat Tom Dashle, NBC news anchor Tom Brokaw and several others. Both were considered liberals and targets of ultra-right talk radio show hosts. The anthrax letters never reached the intended targets. Instead, high-speed mail sorting machines pressed spores outside the envelopes, and the deadly spores infected some postal workers and individuals whose mail just happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time.

When the first cases of anthrax became public, the media tried to blame "Muslim terrorists." Then Vice President Dick Cheney and other Bush officials and media pundits tried to link the anthrax to Iraq, citing unnamed "experts" who falsely claimed the anthrax had chemicals that were only found in Iraq. Several months later the FBI started leaking to the media that the anthrax almost assuredly came from a U.S. military biological weapons lab in Fort Detrick, Md.

At first the name of Dr. Ayaad Asaad, a scientist of Egyptian ancestry, was leaked. Then Dr. Steven Hatfill

Labor meeting set for Tijuana in December

Where can workers fighting pay cuts and job elimination and community activists demanding a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions meet international representatives from Cuban, Venezuelan, Bolivian, Colombian, Mexican and other unions? These leaders in today's struggle for a better world so necessary for workers, poor, Indigenous, immigrant and African-descendent people will meet for discussions in Tijuana, Mexico, Dec. 5-7 for the Fifth Cuba/Venezuela/Mexico/North American Labor Conference!

A special program welcoming the Families of the Cuban Five on Dec. 5 is planned to highlight the demand for family visits, which are cruelly denied to the five Cuban heroes held unjustly in U.S. prisons, as well as the demand for their freedom. Last year, the first collaboration between the International Committee for Freedom of the Cuban Five and the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange keynoted Irma Sehwerert, mother of René González and former Chicago, Ill., electrical worker and union member.

Register now! Watch laborexchange.blogspot.com for updates and more information.

—Cheryl LaBash

was named as a "person of interest." The same types of unsubstantiated circumstantial "facts" were spread through the media as are now appearing about Dr. Ivins. The Justice Department has now stated they were wrong about Hatfill and have given him over \$5 million to settle the lawsuit he brought against the U.S. government.

We may never find out which individual or individuals actually put anthrax spores in the mail. But all the evidence points to the U.S. government biological warfare laboratories at Fort Detrick. The U.S. bio-weapons program is clearly responsible for the deaths, illnesses and panic that took place in 2001.

What is anthrax?

Anthrax is a bacterial disease that is relatively common in agricultural areas. When anthrax infects the skin (the most common natural form), it is treatable with ordinary antibiotics and is usually not life threatening. If spores are breathed in through the lungs, however, anthrax can be very deadly.

During World War II, the U.S. developed a huge biological weapons industry under the leadership of the then-head of Merck pharmaceutical company. Ordinary anthrax bacteria were mass-produced and converted into dried spores that could be spread through the air. It was an advanced industrial process, and to this day only a few countries have been able to do it. This so-called weapons-grade anthrax is hard to make and even harder to handle and store.

The difficulty in making and handling biological-weapons-grade material is what has made biological terrorism more fiction than fact. But this material is readily available in military-sponsored U.S. research labs. These labs supposedly study defense against biological weapons, but they may also be involved in recreating biological-weapons capability for the U.S. in clear violation of the Biologic and Toxin Weapons Convention to which the U.S. is a signatory.

Starting in 1997, the number of U.S. labs funded to research anthrax expanded greatly. Without these labs, the weaponized anthrax spores that killed five people would never have been available. After 2001 enormous amounts of money were diverted from real health needs to research these biological warfare materials. And the danger of future releases, whether accidental or on purpose, has increased greatly, while spending on public health has declined.

Despite years of claims that bio-terrorism is a major health threat, there have so far been no deaths in the U.S. or anywhere else from biological terrorism—other than the five anthrax deaths in 2001. These deaths can be attributed to so-called bio-terrorism defense.

In short the Pentagon and its research divisions, the politicians that fund them, and those scientists and health professionals who took the money to do the dirty work should be held responsible for the anthrax deaths in 2001—no matter which hands stuffed the envelopes with the deadly spores.

The writer is a Doctor of Public Health.

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Denver's DNC/Movement sets marches, rallies to raise key issues

By Larry Hales
Denver

While the nominating conventions of the two major U.S. ruling class parties are fast approaching, the two major candidates posture and spar over who is best capable of managing the imperialist colossus at a time of an expanding economic crisis.

Delegates to the conventions will be expecting lavish parties and speeches of form, with little real content or intent to break with the status quo. What they will see is the anger of thousands who are fed up and want real change—a change that will ultimately have to be systemic.

Vigorous demonstrations are expected at both conventions. In Denver, where the Democratic National Convention is being held, the Recreate 68 Alliance has put together a series of events for the five days of the convention. The group has been organizing protests since the announcement early last year that Denver would host the DNC.

The protests are designed to show the Democratic Party's complicity with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as expose it as a party of the capitalist class—

that is and will continue to be, with scant differences, just as brutal as the Republican Party.

The week begins Aug. 23, with trainings and clinics from noon to 6 p.m. at Lincoln Park, across the street from the State Capitol.

An Aug. 24 "End the Occupations" rally on the west steps of the Capitol begins at 9 a.m. and a march at 10:30 a.m. kicks off from the Capitol and marches down to the Pepsi Center. Featured speakers at the rally include Ida Audeh, a Palestinian refugee; former Black Panther Kathleen Cleaver; Ward Churchill; Chairman Fred Hampton Jr. of the Prisoners of Conscience Committee; Ron Kovic, author of "Born on the Fourth of July"; and Cynthia McKinney, Green Party presidential candidate. Performances will be given by Blue Scholars, David Rovics, M-1 and stic man of dead prez, and Jim Page.

On Aug. 25 a march and rally for human rights and in solidarity with political prisoners will begin at 10 a.m. at Civic Center Park in downtown Denver and proceed to the federal courthouse.

There will be special messages from Mumia Abu-Jamal and Leonard Peltier. Speakers will include Pam Africa from

the MOVE Organization; Rosa Clemente, Green Party vice presidential candidate; King Downing, national coordinator for the ACLU Campaign against Racial Profiling; Ricardo Romero, national coordinator of the Mexican Liberation Organization; Natsu Saito; Jenny Esquivio, for political prisoner Eric McDavid; and Cha Cha Jiménez, founder of the Young Lords. And on Aug. 28, the DNC National Mobilization for Just and Humane Immigration Reform will stage a march beginning at Rudy Park, 2855 W. Howard Pl., marching down Colfax Avenue and finishing with a rally at Lincoln Park. An event being billed as the Festival of Democracy will occur throughout the week, with speakers including Deb Sweet from World Can't Wait and Ramona Africa from MOVE, as well as many organizations sponsoring and holding events on imperialism, the economic crisis, rac-



Presidential candidate Cynthia McKinney, right, supports the demand: Freedom for Leonard Peltier, far left, Mumia Abu-Jamal, left, the Cuban 5 and all U.S. political prisoners.



WW PHOTO JOHN CATALINOTTO

ism and the prison industrial complex, sexism, homophobia and many of the ills endemic to the capitalist system.

Other musicians and spoken word artists performing throughout the week are Savage Family, Rebel Diaz, Debajo Del Agua, DJ Cavem/Moetavation, Whiskey Blanket, Mindstates Music, Dario Rosa, DJ Asar Heru and Karma, Dinigunim, Slam Nuba and more.

No matter who is elected, the government of either candidate will still do the bidding of the capitalist class. The state itself will remain repressive and grow more so as people seek a way out of the suffering that comes with a bust cycle in the system.

The real struggle is in the streets. Those who are able should go to both DNC and RNC protests and express the will of those who dream of a better world. □

U.S. sends two more carrier groups to Iran's seas

By Dustin Langley

Aug. 12—The impending arrival of new U.S. warships in the Persian Gulf region will mark the largest build-up of U.S. naval forces in the area since the 1991 Gulf War.

The aircraft carriers USS Theodore Roosevelt and USS Ronald Reagan, along with the USS Iwo Jima, an amphibious assault ship, are sailing toward the Persian Gulf to reinforce the U.S. strike forces in the region, along with a British Royal Navy carrier battle group and a French nuclear hunter-killer submarine.

This move follows the ominous Operation Brimstone, a massive military exercise involving more than a dozen warships from the U.S., England and France in the Atlantic Ocean in preparation for a possible confrontation with Iran.

The USS Roosevelt, which participated in the just-concluded exercise, and the USS Ronald Reagan will join two U.S. naval battle groups in the area: the USS Abraham Lincoln with its Carrier Strike Group Nine; and the USS Peleliu, an amphibious assault ship, with its expeditionary strike group.

This massive deployment means that hundreds of nuclear-armed warplanes, thousands of troops, and destroyers capable of launching cruise missiles carrying nuclear weapons, bunker busters, or fragmentation bombs will be available for a strike on Iran. While Russia is bogged down with the crisis in Georgia, and China is occupied with the Olympics, the Bush administration may believe that this is an opportune time to strike. This massive deployment is occurring as both houses of Congress are set to approve resolutions that would mandate a U.S. blockade, itself an act of war under international law.

Organizers with the Stop War on Iran Campaign (SWOI), who initiated the Aug. 2 National Day of Action and report that protests occurred in more than 100 cities, call this deployment of naval forces an ominous sign that demands a response from the anti-war movement.

Sara Flounders, a SWOI organizer,

said, "This massive military mobilization sends a clear signal that we must take action now to prevent another criminal U.S. war. In the next few days and weeks, we will be mobilizing in the streets against an attack on Iran. As we write, we are preparing placards, banners and printed material to take to the Republican and Democratic national convention protests. We know that the only force that will stop the drive to war is a grassroots people's movement."

For more information and updates, see [www. StopWarOnIran.org](http://www.StopWarOnIran.org)

Dustin Langley is a Navy veteran who served aboard an amphibious assault ship and is an organizer with the Stop War on Iran Campaign.

New York, Aug. 2.
WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL



Alternate media gets out message 'No war on Iran!'

By Daniella Rodriguez
New York

On Aug. 1-3, anti-war activists in 100 U.S. cities, several cities in Canada, and even in Kolkata, India, took to the streets in coordinated actions to protest Pentagon preparations for a U.S.-Israeli war on Iran. This anti-war response was very significant. The Stop War on Iran Campaign's call for the protests had been issued only a few weeks prior, and the protests occurred in the dead of the summer, when schools were out, and many activists were on vacation.

The corporate media, however, turned a

blind eye, and hardly covered the protests. This is not surprising. The establishment media, which claim to value objectivity, are really heavily biased, with deep ties to capitalist corporations and the U.S. government. For example, mainstream media coverage of the U.S. wars on Iraq and Afghanistan hardly shows Pentagon destruction of Iraqi and Afghan homes and local communities, or the tens of thousands of civilian casualties, or even the thousands of U.S. veterans disabled from these wars.

During a time of war and economic instability the media act as an arm of the government, hiding the real issues behind

headlines concerning the lifestyles of the rich and famous.

However, the voice of the people Aug. 1-3 was not silenced. Independent outlets such as local community media and YouTube carried news of these protests to many thousands through the World Wide Web. Using alternative sources, protesters not only expressed their resistance to another U.S. imperialist war, but also demanded that the U.S. government fund measures to relieve the pressing economic crisis at home, instead of giving money to the Pentagon and the banks.

The writer is an intern at the Stop War on Iran office in New York.

School bus drivers want just pay as strike looms

By Frank Neisser
Boston

USW Local 8751, the Boston School Bus Drivers, are in an intense cycle of negotiations for a fair contract with multimillion dollar British-owned international First Student Corp. and with the School Department and the mayor.

The union contract expired on June 30, and if a new contract satisfactory to the drivers is not in place by Aug. 21, union drivers will not participate in the fall bidding process on that date, ensuring that transportation will not be available on the first day of school in the fall. This process assigns routes to drivers for the school year.

The drivers have been negotiating since early spring, and staged a strong picket and disruption on the occasion of the company's bid for summer job runs at the end of June. This action showed the company and school officials the union's ability and readiness to shut down school transportation if a settlement is not reached.

The workers also demonstrated the union's strength and preparedness to strike by conducting the first- and second-shift strike readiness committee trainings at the same time and place as negotiations with the company and the city, forcing the mayor's officials to walk a gauntlet of militant, angry, strike-ready drivers, who were far from shy about making their feelings known.

The drivers are fighting for basic economic equity and justice in their contract. Public school workers in the city have 85 percent of their health care insurance paid for by management. The school bus drivers only receive 80 percent. The drivers are seeking benefit improvements including long-term disability insurance.



Drivers rally in June in show of strength.

WW PHOTO: ED CHILDS

The company had proposed a long list of concessions and take-aways, which the union has been battling. The union's position is "no concessions, no cuts." The militant stand of the union has succeeded in winning the settlement of a large body of back grievances going back more than five years.

The union is calling on its supporters to step up pressure on the company, the School Department and the city in the final days before the strike deadline to support economic justice for the drivers

and safety for the children. The Labor Solidarity Committee of the International Action Center here is organizing call-ups to community organizations and progressive individuals to support the union.

On its Web site, USW Local 8751 has served notice to the public that "the British monopoly First Student, Inc.—which the City of Boston awarded a no-bid \$343 million management contract with a \$6 million bonus—is holding the children, parents and bus drivers of the Boston Public Schools hostage to its own corporate greed.

"With its labor agreement with 800 bus drivers expired on June 30, 2008, First Student has engaged in bad faith bargaining with the drivers, who have provided quality transportation for desegregated education to the students and parents of Boston since 1974. Instead of offering just and equitable wage and benefit increases to the workers who provide the service, super-profitable First Student has demanded concessions and cutbacks from a workforce already reeling from the economic crisis and cost of living in the Boston area.

"Take Action Now to support the hard working school bus drivers of Boston's communities. The City's vendor agreement gives it the power to enforce 'harmonious labor relations'. The City must force First Student to the table in good faith to avert the pending crisis. Call them today to say you want 'safety for the children, and justice for the drivers, Now!'

"Mayor Tom Menino 617-635-4500; School Superintendent Carol Johnson 617-635-9050; School Transportation Director Rich Jacobs 617-635-9520; First Student Vice President Bob Timilty 617-532-2500." □

California gov orders wage cuts, layoffs

By Caleb T. Maupin

California's Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger took a look at the economic crisis. He noticed that the state of California was lacking in funds. He responded with an executive order: cut over 200,000 state employees to minimum wage and fire 10,500 temporaries.

Workers who have made salaries and hourly wages much higher, and who have committed no personal wrongdoing, will be reduced to \$6.55 an hour, the federal minimum wage.

Outcry has been heard from many different sectors of society. John Chiang,

the state controller, who was expected to carry out this crime, was quoted in the Aug. 5 Sacramento Bee as saying, "We are not in a cash crisis." Chiang has spoken out sharply against this massive pay cut, which would affect over 200,000 people's wages. He has even gone as far as to say he would refuse to enact it, which caused Schwarzenegger to threaten legal action against Chiang.

The Service Employees International Union has already taken legal action. According to the San Francisco Chronicle, the SEIU has filed complaints with the Public Employee Relations Board, as well as suing the governor over his addi-

tional plan to lay off 10,300 temporary employees.

The unions are focusing on the fact that Schwarzenegger failed to use proper procedures in order to make the pay cuts. "The governor did an end run around the labor process and the government code," SEIU attorney Paul Harris said Aug. 1. (Associated Press) Unions are fighting against this wage cut.

This attempted cut is a prime example of how capitalist politicians will be trying to force the working class to bear the brunt of the economic crisis. Anger is rising all over the state at the governor's outrageous proposal. □

Colorado rally protests killing of transwoman

By Larry Hales

On July 23 the Colorado Anti-Violence Program held a rally in Greeley for Angie Zapata, a Latina transwoman who was murdered on July 17. CAVP is an organization "dedicated to eliminating violence within and against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities in Colorado."

According to CAVP, last year in Colorado there were 118 bias-motivated acts of violence committed against LGBTQ people.

The murder of 21-year-old Zapata in her Greeley apartment was brutal. She was beaten to death by 31-year-old Allen Ray Andrade, whom she met on the Internet and dated.

Andrade's own accounts led to the murder being qualified as a hate crime, as he

states that he killed her because he "discovered" her identity as a transperson. He describes Zapata as "it," ruthlessly stating that he delivered a final blow, using a fire extinguisher as a weapon, once he realized he had not "killed it" after repeatedly battering her. (Associated Press, July 30)

Colorado's Bias-Motivated Crimes statute "finds and declares that it is the right of every person, regardless of race, color, ancestry, religion, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation to be secure and protected from fear, intimidation, harassment, and physical harm caused by the activities of individuals and groups." It defines sexual orientation as "a person's actual or perceived orientation toward heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, or transgender status."

Kelly Costello, director of victim ser-

vices at CAVP, said in a press release: "A hate crime like this serves to intimidate and disrupt an entire community. No one should ever live their lives in fear and intimidation regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. While we work to show everyone the gravity of hate crimes and the importance of preventing their reoccurrence, we also work towards building a world where everyone enjoys human rights and the ability to live with dignity and respect."

The quote speaks to the broader mission of CAVP, a member organization of the Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition. Greeley is home to the Swift meatpacking plant, which has allowed Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents and local authorities to raid its premises and round up undocumented immigrant workers. □

Letter from

The assault on U.S. autoworkers is also being felt by people who work for auto suppliers throughout North America.

A study just released by A.T. Kearney Inc., a management consultant firm in Southfield, Michigan, predicts that auto suppliers will lose \$50 billion in the next three years.

This annual study concludes that nearly 30 percent of the 105 largest auto supply companies traded on Wall St. are considered to be in a dire financial position. Many of these companies will likely go out of business or into bankruptcy

While the study reflected concern for the profitability of these corporations, and not the workers, it is well known that employees at auto suppliers American Axle and Manufacturing, Visteon Corp. and Delphi Corp. have made numerous concessions to keep their jobs.

U.S. car and truck sales are likely to be down by 2 million vehicles next year

Money, Black Power and radio

By U-Savior

The August 2008 issue of Black Enterprise featured an article entitled “Money, Power & Black Radio: How Steve Harvey and Tom Joyner Capture Your Ears and Dollars” written by George Alexander. In the article Alexander points out the viability of Black radio in today’s market—despite the seemingly obvious challenges.

As is the case with the approach to many of the problems affecting Black people in America today, the article addresses the “symptoms” and treats them as the focus rather than reaching deeper to present an accurate analysis of the problems facing a medium that has always been under siege.

The article cites “a rapidly changing industry” and ‘brutal competition” as some of the major obstacles facing Black radio today. It claims that the medium “can survive through syndicated programming and bold entrepreneurial moves.”

But what causes these inequities? There are stations that are doing well despite the market’s overall slump. So why is it that with all the sound business models they could emulate, Black radio still struggles? Why has it historically had difficulty competing despite the fact that Black music (or urban, as it is called today) is one of the most popular genres in the world?

The article makes no mention of the historically inequitable treatment that Black radio station owners receive at the hands of Arbitron, the radio ratings system which discounts Black-owned and -programmed radio stations through inaccurate, outdated and racially biased measurement systems. Nor does it mention the Madison Avenue executives who render Black radio unprofitable by refusing to pay premium advertising rates, even though these stations enjoy the largest audience across the board.

Alexander points out that Black radio suffers because a Beyonce, for example, can be heard on many mainstream stations and that listeners need not tune in to exclusively Black-programmed stations to hear her music. But it neglects to deal with the aspects that historically set Black radio apart from all other radio in the first place and that are now nonexistent: serious Black talk and personality radio.

During its golden age Black radio was exciting because it allowed listeners to hear new music; it made listeners enthusiastic about the listening experience because the jocks viewed their uniqueness as a strength. Now we’re forced to hear the same ten songs by the same five artists over and over, played by disc jockeys who promise not to talk too much.

Today’s mainstream Black radio does not deal with Black issues in the unapologetic manner that helped it make a connection with the community. Bob Law’s show, Night Talk, was popular not solely because it was syndicated. It was popular because Bob Law’s approach to politics and culture was relevant, and the show’s content was potent. Comparing the availability of a Black crossover pop artist to the availability of the kind of political content and local coverage offered from the 1960s through the 1980s does us a disservice.

As pointed out in the Black Waxx Multimedia, Inc. film “Disappearing Voices: The Decline of Black Radio,” it is not simply the artists or the jocks who are disappearing. Nor is it simply their absence that renders Black radio impotent. It is the fact that the voice of the community they represent has no forum.

Racism and inequality

The Alexander article sought to treat the predicament of Black radio as merely an economic one, when in fact politics and America’s inherent racism are to blame. Even from an economic standpoint we must go back to the beginning of Black people’s presence in this country. While whites owned businesses and set up insti-

tutions, Blacks were forced to work for free. Even at the point of the emancipation of the enslaved there were no programs set up so Blacks could “catch up.”

The disparities grew exponentially as time passed. When radio spectrum licenses were first given out, Blacks were excluded. We can’t imagine there is a level playing field in the radio industry today when there is still a need for affirmative action in the workplaces and educational institutions across the nation.

The answer to conglomeration and racism is not an updated business model. The National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters complains about the monopoly that conglomerates like Clear Channel enjoy, but there is more to the story

than that. Arbitron and Madison Avenue work to keep Black radio poor, patronizing it with substandard rates to maintain their false face of diversity. White-owned media enjoy proliferation while Black-owned radio struggles to stay afloat. Meanwhile NABOB members won’t go for the jugular because they need the crumbs the ad execs dangle in front of them in order to survive.

How can the station owners be sure of their audience when they can’t trust the people measuring them? And if Arbitron’s numbers can’t be trusted, how many times will station owners continue to change their format without questioning the fact that no matter what they play they get paid the same substandard rates for airtime?

Another factor that isn’t taken into consideration is the role the Federal Communications Commission plays—or doesn’t play. The FCC is supposed to pro-

tect the interests of the public by seeing to it that radio station owners operate with some level of responsibility to the public, which includes offering programming that serves the community as well as protecting station owners from being forced out of business by monopolies. Clear Channel and Infinity Broadcasting are stark evidence that the FCC is not doing that job. In the article there is no mention of holding this government body accountable.

The fact is most people may not listen to the radio anymore because they sense a lack of loyalty on the part of these owners. A huge sector of the Black population wants more from Black radio than relationship guidance, gossip, comedy and Jesus. They want to be taken seriously from a political perspective. They want radio that reflects their local issues.

They don’t want Black-faced radio that furthers a white-business/political/cultural agenda. They want Black radio that reflects what is best and brightest about their community. You can’t have that if a guy who’s never been to their town and who doesn’t know about the young boy who was killed by police that week is on the radio during all the prime times. Meanwhile coverage of local activists who make positive changes in the community is replaced by gossip jocks whose sole contribution to the airwaves is “who’s sleeping with who, who’s gay, and whose breasts are fake.”

We need to make room for our best and brightest. There are too many charismatic and informed individuals who need access to the microphone. Regardless of the success of a few chosen ones, if we settle for anything less, we can’t really call it Black radio with a clear conscience.

The writer is with Black Waxx Multimedia, Inc. and is the director of the documentary, “Disappearing Voices: The Decline of Black Radio.” Go to www.disappearingvoices.com. Email: info@blackwaxx.com.



NYC’S SUBWAYS:

MetroCard glitch brings chaos

By G. Dunkel
New York

It was chaos. All over New York City people couldn’t buy MetroCards to get to work on the bus or the subway in the morning from July 28 to 30. Some 122,000 transactions on the MetroCard vending machines failed, and 20,000 riders had money deducted from their credit cards or bank accounts without getting a card.

One City University of New York worker told Workers World, “They took \$81 out of my account but didn’t give me my card. I had to buy a single trip for \$2. And next year these robbers are going to raise the fare again!”

The Metropolitan Transit Agency said the outages were only on July 28-29, but the NY Daily News reported major, but not systemwide, failures on July 30. The MTA’s vending card system averages one systemwide failure a month and about 800 service calls for its 2,245 machines a day.

This failure was massive. The crowds trying to buy MetroCards grew so large that at some stations the cops just opened the gates and let passengers in for free. The vending machines that accept cash ran out of change.

While 85 to 90 percent of U.S. workers use automobiles to get to their jobs, four of every five rush-hour commuters to New York City’s central business district depend on subways, buses and trains. New York is the only city in the United States where more than half of all households do not own a car. In Manhattan over 75 percent do not own a car compared with the national rate of only 8 percent.

Average weekday MTA ridership is over 8 million people. The MTA serves a population of 14.6 million people in a 5,000-square-mile area.

The recent outage problem was caused by failing programs on one of the computers that encrypts the transactions sent to the credit card companies and banks. This overloaded the other computer and caused the transactions to time out.

It took two days to figure out what had happened and then three hours to get the programs restarted. The MTA admitted it didn’t devote the “staff resources” or “technicians” needed to monitor the programs or document how to re-start the programs if they failed.

A far more accurate word for “staff resources” would be workers. Changing to MetroCards and vending machines

replaced the thousands of workers who distributed, sold, collected and counted tokens with machines.

But while the MTA could replace most of the workers involved in collecting fares, they can’t replace them all. They still need workers to clean and repair the turnstiles that read the cards and to monitor and maintain their systems.

Also, in July, American Airline’s automated baggage system went down and AA didn’t have enough workers to manually sort the bags. Flights were canceled and thousands of passengers were told their only choice was to fly without their luggage or not fly. AA’s problem turned out to be their network, another automation tool that needs to be monitored and tuned by workers.

These problems with automation are not unique. Recently, London’s system went down and thousands of passengers had to replace their cards. The Chicago Transit Authority overcharged 400 riders in late July.

Automation can drastically slash the workforce, but it also makes the workers who remain much more critical.

The bottom line is: Bosses can’t run their economy without workers. □

an auto worker

compared to 2007. This will cause a reduction in the labor force and continued company pressure to cut production costs by the remaining workers.

Keeping the failing suppliers from going into bankruptcy would require a massive infusion of cash to keep these companies solvent. However, the study indicates that suppliers could not depend on raising money from banks or capital markets. Also, it is unlikely that companies in India or China would be interested in buying U.S. suppliers or automakers.

As the U.S. economy continues in a downward spiral, the future of the auto and related industries is bleak, and without organized struggle workers risk being discarded like a tool that is no longer useful to the company.

—Lloyd Clarke, former autoworker and activist, UAW Local 668.

'We're sorry' — Apology for slavery: Too little, too late

By Dolores Cox

This July 29 the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution that apologized to Black Americans for the inhumanity, injustice, cruelty and brutality of slavery and for Jim Crow segregation. The resolution was sponsored by Congressperson Steve Cohen from Tennessee. He is a white man representing a mostly Black district in Memphis.

Another Democrat, Sen. Tom Harkin from Iowa, is considering introducing a similar bill in the Senate. How long has Harkin been considering his bill? And will he go beyond just the consideration stage? Could it be related to the fact that he's running against a Black candidate in an August primary?

Apologies made by Congress are nothing new. The federal government apologized to Japanese-Americans for confining them in concentration camps during World War II, for which they also received reparations and compensation. And the U.S. government also apologized to the people of Japan for dropping the atomic bomb on them. (Noteworthy too is that the German government gave both monetary and nonmonetary reparations to Jewish survivors, their heirs and the state of Israel for the Nazi Holocaust.)

Earlier this year, the Senate apologized to Native Americans for the genocidal atrocities committed against them. However, the damage and deplorable conditions created

by those atrocities are still being felt today, especially on reservations.

A few years ago the Senate also apologized for the government's failure to intervene and put a halt to the lynchings of approximately 4,000 African-Americans in this country. Both the North and the South were complicit in these brutal crimes.

What's that old saying—"better late than never"? In these instances, have better-late-than-never apologies and acknowledgments of wrong doings made significant differences or improvements in the condition of the people affected by those atrocious acts, past or present? There's a difference between apologetic words and actions that demonstrate true remorse. Another old saying goes: "Actions speak louder than words."

Under the Clinton administration in 1993, Congressperson John Conyers of Detroit introduced a bill calling for an acknowledgment of the cruelty, brutality and inhumanity of slavery and for a federal government apology. The bill also called for a commission to examine the institution of slavery with regard to the impact on African-American descendants of the uninterrupted racial and economic discrimination emanating from it. Although Conyers' bill didn't specifically call for reparations, his bill never even got out of committee because it didn't get the necessary support.

Conyers continued to introduce the bill again and again, but there continued to be denial by Congress of the U.S. Black Holocaust, including the Transatlantic Slave Trade. There was fear that acknowledgment and/or apology for the horrors of slavery would lead to a demand for reparations, for, of course, the two matters are inextricably linked. (Slave owners, however, received monetary compensation for the loss of free labor after slavery ended.)

Now in 2008 Conyers' colleagues seem to be having an epiphany. One has to wonder why. What are the politics behind it? What is the motivating and driving force? Could Sen. Obama's presumptive nomination and possible election this year have anything to do with it? Interesting too is the obvious omission of any mention of reparations in the symbolic apology the House just passed.

There were very interesting reactions to the House's apology for slavery and the Jim Crow era. Some angry and hostile bigots were downright upset with the decision. One angry blogger's comment, which was championed by quite a few folks who were in agreement, stated that the apology should have been coupled with restitution in the form of a one-way ticket back to Africa—to get rid of "them" once and for all.

Other folks mentioned that their immigrant ancestors also had "a hard time" making it in this country; that they didn't

have specific knowledge of where their great-grandparents came from either; that they have difficulty finding jobs too; and that Black people need to put that all behind them, move on and get over it!

Then there were those who commented that Black people should be grateful that "we've let them" have certain things, so they should stop complaining. Certain things? Is it because those white people no longer hear about wide-spread, blatant terrorism by the KKK and others of their ilk? Or about bombings of or fires set to Black churches, homes, orphanages and businesses? Is it because Black people can now sit anywhere on a bus or train or in a waiting room? That they can now enter any public library, pool, park, playground or beach? Or stay in any hotel, eat in any public restaurant, drink from any water fountain, use any restroom?

Or try on clothes in any store, go in front door entrances, walk freely on any sidewalk in town (that's debatable)? Or go to "integrated" schools (in inner cities)? Or leave their designated ghetto and get a home mortgage (albeit subprime and foreclosed)? So what more do "those people" want, they ask? When will "they" be satisfied? After all, who the hell do "they" think "they" are anyway? Our equals?

Regrettably, some people just don't get it. And some never will. We may have come a long way; but we sure have a much longer way to go before we shall truly overcome. □



People's Assembly generates plan of action

By Dante Strobino
Raleigh, N.C.

On Aug. 9 over 75 African-American workers and community activists converged in Raleigh, N.C., for a People's Assembly. Initiated by the Black Workers for Justice, these assemblies are part of the Historic Thousands on Jones St. (HKonJ) movement that brought over 5,000 people to the streets in Feb. 2007 and 2008 around a powerful 14-point People's Agenda.

The People's Assemblies are an effort by coalition partners to bring this agenda to life in local areas throughout the state and throughout the year and to broaden the participation.

The 14-point People's Agenda includes a broad range of issues affecting the African-American community and workers, including police brutality, education, health care, the war, the economy, reform of the electoral system and collective bargaining rights for public-sector workers.

One highlight of the Aug. 9 People's Assembly was the large delegation of striking Moncure Plywood workers from International Association of Machinists Local W369 in Chatham County. The strike began on July 20 after bosses gave a take-it-or-leave-it last contract offer that would mandate 60-hour work weeks, weaken the seniority clause in a way that could lend itself to favoritism, increase health insurance premiums by over 300 percent, give fewer holidays off and without regard to safety violations. Workers also raised concerns about unfair labor practices.

IAM Local W369 President Lewis Cameron expressed concern to Workers World that community members may think they were striking just to get more money. Although they deserve higher pay, he reiterated, "We are just trying to secure



NORTH CAROLINA

People's Assembly, Raleigh, N.C.

PHOTO: AJAMU DILLAHUNT

our rights to a decent job and to work with dignity."

The workers were received with warm support from other People's Assembly delegates, who voted to participate in the picket line on Aug. 27, the day before Barack Obama is giving his acceptance speech, to mark the 45th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream Speech" and to continue the legacy of Dr. King, who stood with striking workers in Memphis, Tenn., in the days before his assassination.

Delegates broke out into committees based on areas of interest. The anti-war committee, led by Khalilah Sabra of Muslim America Society Freedom Foundation, discussed the escalation of war on Iran and the need to divert the Pentagon budget to address the peoples' needs. When their committee was giving a report to the entire assembly, a long discussion about the role of Israel broke out. Many spoke out in support of the Palestinians' right to self-determination.

Members of the workers' rights committee discussed supporting the Raleigh City Workers chapter of UE Local 150, which is struggling to get policies written

by city management encouraging all city councilors and the city manager, Russell Allen, to meet and confer with elected union officers.

The committee also agreed to support the mental health care workers in UE Local 150 struggling for a Mental Health Workers Bill of Rights; the campaign to assure a safe and just merger between two state psychiatric hospitals—Dorothea Dix and John Umstead; and for workers to be reimbursed, since the new BEACON payroll system that was rolled out in December has shorted hundreds of workers hundreds if not thousands of dollars.

The local elections committee is working to assure that all have access to the ballots and that voter suppression, like that which took place in Florida in 2000 and Ohio in 2004, does not happen to people of color in North Carolina.

The anti-racist committee brought forth many issues of police brutality and the criminal "justice" system in the African-American community. This includes the brutal murders by police of Antwan Tomlin in Wilson, N.C., on Feb. 1, 2007, along with the unjust incarcerations of James Johnson and Amanda Council.

When this committee was also asked to organize around justice for immigrant workers, a long, fiery discussion followed. One participant raised the myth that "they are stealing our jobs" and was answered by many others who denounced NAFTA and other "free trade" policies, the militarization of the border, racist media hysteria and the raids at workplaces and in working-class communities.

Rukiya Dillahun, member of Black Workers for Justice and one of the assembly's organizers, added another interesting twist to the whole debate. Commenting on the deterioration of the economy and joblessness, she said, "You hear they are coming here to take our jobs ... what jobs?"

Assembly attendees discussed the checkpoints being set up in their communities. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials have a goal of arresting 3,000 undocumented residents by the end of August, and roadblocks will take place throughout the month in North Carolina, particularly focusing on Alamance and Henderson counties.

Sabra commented on the economic downturn and the need for more jobs that has created divisions between Black and Latin@ workers: "Meanwhile, the U.S. government is spending billions of dollars every day to finance Israel, the war on Iraq and now on Iran and building bombs. ... We need to stop fighting amongst ourselves for the crumbs off their table."

In a renewed spirit of unity, led by the Fruit of Labor cultural artists, assembly participants closed the convention by singing: "We will not stand for exploitation. We will not stand for racism. We will not stand for injustice."

The author is a union organizer with UE Local 150 and with the youth group FIST, organizing high school students to fight against the war and military recruitment.

Texas executions defy international law

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

In April, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Baze v. Rees* that the three drugs used in lethal injections were okay, opening the door for executions to proceed after an eight-month hiatus. Since then, 18 people have been executed, 100 percent of them from the South, 33 percent of them in Texas, and all but one by lethal injection.

In the first week of August, Texas authorities drew international condemnation after executing two noncitizens who were denied access to their consulate in violation of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, signed by 165 countries including the U.S.

Mexican citizen José Medellín's execution was put on hold for almost four hours on Aug. 5, while the U.S. Supreme Court reviewed appeals. Protestors gathered in Huntsville during thunderstorms from Tropical Storm Edouard.

The crowd grew during the five-hour delay and was joined by Heliberto Chi's family, who carried signs, wore T-shirts with Chi's photo on them, and spoke at the rally.

Medellín's case garnered worldwide attention after the International Court of Justice in The Hague ordered the U.S. to prevent the execution until a review of his case could be held.

The Mexican Foreign Ministry issued a statement that "The Mexican government will continue insisting on the obligation of the United States to provide the review and reconsideration of the death sentence of other Mexican nationals." (Houston Chronicle)

Demonstrations were held around Mexico, including a large one on the international bridge between McAllen, Texas, and Reynosa, Mexico.

Two days later, protesters again gathered in Huntsville, this time for the Aug. 7 execution of Chi, a Honduran citizen. Not only were Chi's rights violated under the Vienna Convention, but also under a treaty signed directly between Honduras and the U.S., ironically named the Treaty for Friendship and Commerce.

Chi's brother Hernán spoke at the rally outside the death house, saying that the U.S. "is an imperial country that only cares about money, not Black people and Brown people and poor people. We are a poor people and here we have no rights."

At 6:00 p.m. when the execution was to begin, 15 to 20 family members surrounded Mirna Chi, Heliberto's mother. They stood with protesters during the execution.

Chi's cousin Édgar witnessed the exe-



Chi's brother Hernan, in front of Huntsville, Texas, Death House.

cution for the family and came out of the death house sobbing and then collapsed into the arms of the family. Through sobs he explained in Spanish to media from Mexico, Honduras and Latin America what had happened in the execution chamber. "He is at peace. He is with Jesus now. He said that he loved all of you."

Relatives gathered to meet his returning coffin at a Honduran airport on Aug. 10 wearing T-shirts with Chi's photo and the slogan, "For us and the people of Honduras, you will always live."

Chi's 17-year-old brother Germán told Workers World that their grandmother had taken ill in July and told the family she was going to die because she did not want to be alive when the U.S. took her grandson from her. He will be buried near his grandmother on Aug. 12 in the coastal city of San Pedro Sula.

Of the 3,300 people on death row in the U.S., 121 are foreign nationals from 33 countries. Fifty-five are from Mexico.

There are now 21 more executions scheduled in the U.S. and 14 of them are

in Texas.

Capital punishment is falling out of favor with many in this country, as fewer people are being charged with capital murder and juries are sentencing fewer people to death. Due to over 125 innocent people being released from death row, many realize that the finality of an execution cannot be undone if a wrongful conviction is discovered.

Of the 14 executions Texas now has scheduled, several have serious legal issues.

Two men convicted under Texas' controversial Law of Parties statute are scheduled to be executed within the same week: Michael Rodriguez on Aug. 14 and Jeff Wood on Aug. 21. Although neither was charged with being the actual murderer, they were both convicted and sentenced to die. Rodriguez has given up his appeals and is a volunteer.

Wood is fighting and has support from his large family as well as abolitionist organizations. On Aug. 2, they held a press conference and rally in San Antonio in the tourist area around the Alamo. Every television station as well as the daily paper covered the event. Hundreds of people in the park signed petitions for Wood.

The highlight of the day was Kids Against the Death Penalty, who wore their own T-shirts and had their own flyer for Wood. They spoke at the rally, attracting the attention of children and adults alike. After the rally, the KADP led an impromptu march around the Alamo.

The next rally for Wood is on Aug. 16

in Austin at the Texas Capitol. See www.savejeffwood.com.

Greg Wright had DNA testing of evidence found on a pair of jeans that showed they were not his jeans, and he passed a polygraph test. There is also a written confession from his codefendant, John Wade Adams, but the state of Texas has issued an execution date of September 9, 2008. See www.freegregwright.com.

Charles Hood is scheduled to die on Sept. 10. Hood's lawyers allege that Texas state court Judge Verla Sue Holland had "a personal and direct interest in the outcome of the case" and was disqualified from trying the case under the Texas Constitution because of her ongoing affair with Hood's prosecutor, Collin County District Attorney Tom O'Connell.

Reginald Perkins has a date for Jan. 22, 2009. According to the Coalition for Truth and Justice, "Perkins has a very low IQ and is mentally retarded. There was neglect and emotional and physical abuse of Perkins. He and his sibling were beaten by their mother and spent nights under the porch to avoid more beatings. His family lived in abject poverty. His mother never showed affection toward her kids and called Reginald 'f***ing cross eyes.' She told him many times she didn't want him to be born and did everything she could think of to try to abort him."

"With so many questionable legal situations and knowing that only the poor face execution, it is crucial that we intensify our efforts to abolish the death penalty," stated Njeri Shakur, organizer with the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement. "George Bush is a mass murderer but he is not on death row, so the arguments that the death penalty is only for the 'worse of the worse' is a fallacy. It is for the poor and oppressed." □

'AFTER INNOCENCE,' a film for truth and justice

By Tha Truth
Political Hip Hop artist/activist

Politically educated individuals have no doubt seen many informative documentaries. I have seen countless well-done documentary films and many have added to my knowledge and evolution. However, "After Innocence" is beyond compelling; this is one of the most important films ever made.

While many tend to ignore the conditions inside the U.S. prison system and tend to think the worst of incarcerated men and women, this film provides the opportunity to get to know those who have been locked away for decades.

"After Innocence" takes us inside a place many individuals would rather not think about. It is easier for many to ignore

topics that are unpleasant, yet often these topics are the ones most worthy of our attention and actions.

From meeting several ex-convicts in the film, we learn about their treatment on the inside and how the system operated during their prison time. The shocking aspect of the film to many is that all of these men were released after serving years in prison because they were innocent—as proved in court years, often decades, after their convictions.

After being released, these wrongfully convicted individuals must deal with problems such as having to pay thousands of dollars to have their criminal records expunged, not being compensated financially for their suffering, trying to find a job and living with the traumatic memories of isolation and inhumane treatment inside the prison walls.

It is beyond critical that any compassionate, politically educated individual see this film and encourage others to see it. We often speak of the problems of the U.S. legal system, but this film provides irrefutable evidence of the drastic need to completely revolutionize it.

Fortunately, those who made the movie are organized and active in helping to change the system. After seeing "After Innocence," viewers will no doubt

be inspired to play a part in this crucial struggle. Far from being depressing, the film offers ways to get involved and portrays many courageous activists and organizers who are making a serious difference.

I have also written a song for my next political rap album called "The Injustice System," which incorporates many of the film's issues and themes. The song features lyrics such as "The movie 'After Innocence' / After you witness it / You see the significance / of changing the whole system it's / The real 'Shawshank Redemption' / That needs attention," and "Daryl Hunt was

innocent / but served 20 years in prison / His innocence was presented / with DNA evidence."

The song's purpose is to infuse themes from the film and my own research to bring attention to the prison-industrial complex, outrageous drug war, horrific death penalty, and lack of humane treatment in the so-called corrections system. Additionally, the purpose of the song (and my CDs) is to quickly educate those who are not prone to watching documentaries or reading informative books.

For more info on the movie, see www.afterinnocence.com. Tha Truth's music is available through www.cdbaby.com/cd/thatruth2. To contact Tha Truth by email: thatruthmusic@yahoo.com.



MARXISM, REPARATIONS & THE BLACK FREEDOM STRUGGLE

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper.

Edited by Monica Moorehead. Includes:

Racism, national oppression & self-determination by Larry Holmes

Black labor from chattel slavery to wage slavery by Sam Marcy

Reparations and Black liberation by Monica Moorehead

Harriet Tubman: woman warrior by Mumia Abu-Jamal

Causes of turmoil in Jamaica by Pat Chin

Black youth: repression & resistance by LeiLani Dowell

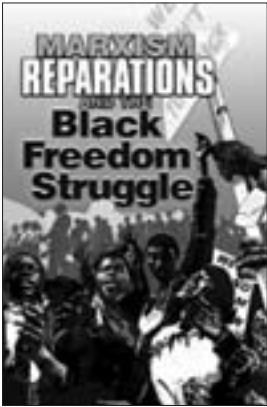
Black & Brown unity: A pillar of struggle for human rights & global justice! by Saladin Muhammad

Are conditions ripe again today? 40th anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion by John Parker

Racism and poverty in the Delta by Larry Hales

Domestic Workers United demand passage of a bill of rights by Imani Henry

Black Reconstruction: The unfinished revolution by Minnie Bruce Pratt



COVER GRAPHIC BY SAHU BARRON

www.Leftbooks.com

MAURITANIA COUP

Anti-terrorism & political instability

By Abayomi Azikiwe, Editor
Pan-African News Wire

On Aug. 6 a military coup took place in the North African nation of Mauritania. This country, whose affairs receive very little attention in the corporate media in the United States, has been a focal point for the Bush administration's so-called "war on terrorism" in the region.

President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi and Prime Minister Yahya Ould Ahmed Waghf were overthrown and detained by members of the elite regiment whose task it was to protect the leadership of the government. The coup took place only hours after the president attempted to terminate his top military guards.

International response to the coup has been largely negative, with many condemning it. Members of the League of Arab States and the African Union have reportedly held discussions with the apparent coup leader, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz.

General Aziz's rise to power came in the aftermath of a government reshuffle that resulted in the appointment of new ministers, many of whom had served with the former Mauritanian leader, Maaouya Ould Taya, who was overthrown in another coup in 2005. General Aziz also initiated the coup that overthrew Ould Taya.

The U.S. role in Mauritania

What is most significant in recent political developments in this North African state is the increasing U.S. role under the Bush administration. Mauritania is a former French colony, which was seized during the advent of colonialism in Africa during the nineteenth century.

During the 1850s-1860s, French military forces took control of the area now known as southern Mauritania. Later, in 1898, France was able to temporarily subdue the population of Moors who had dominated the region politically and economically for centuries. Consequently, in

1904, France established Mauritania as a colonial territory.

Mauritania gained its national independence from France in 1960, alongside many other colonies on the African continent. The Aug. 6 coup was the fifth since the country became an internationally recognized nation. For many years France maintained considerable influence in most of its former colonies in Africa, and Mauritania was no exception. Today the country has a population of three million people including descendants of indigenous Africans, Arabs and Berbers.

In recent years, however, particularly since the Bush administration announced its war on Islamic movements throughout the world, Washington has sought to establish this former French colony as an outpost for military operations in North Africa. According to the Associated Press on Aug. 9, "[T]he U.S. sees Mauritania as a bulwark against the encroachment southward of al-Qaeda-linked militants in North Africa. It had sent dozens of troops to train Mauritania's military units in its far northern deserts, but it suspended those programs in response to the coup."

It is also important to note that as far back as 1999, Mauritania established diplomatic ties with the State of Israel, one of only three members of the Arab League that has done so. Nonetheless, despite the close ties to the U.S. and Israel, the country faces similar problems as its neighbors in the region.

An Aug. 7 report published by the Inter-regional Information Network (IRIN) states that: "Reflecting a global trend, food prices in arid Mauritania have doubled within the past year. In August 2007, thousands were displaced in Mauritania from flooding that wiped out crops and cattle. Months later, food riots broke out in southeast Mauritania."

A Mauritanian graduate student studying in neighboring Senegal, Boubacar Datt, told IRIN that some relief may occur in the wake of the coup, but people



Northwest Africa

are eager for real change in the country. "What they don't see is that Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi was only a mascot and never had power. People talk about Mauritania being a democracy, but Mauritania has always been led by the military. This coup comes as no surprise. Democracy does not exist. It is only on papers. In daily life, Sidi could not realize his campaign promises," Datt said.

In recent weeks, dissident members within the ruling National Party for the Defense of Democracy attempted to organize a public hearing designed to create a commission to investigate the nation's response to the declining standard of living among the people.

A U.S.-based humanitarian monitoring group, FEWSNET, cited that Mauritania still imports 70 percent of its food supply. This problem of internal food production has been exacerbated by the flooding that took place last year that displaced thousands and eliminated crops and livestock. The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) predicted that as a result of the rising global prices of food and fuel, the country could experience a high level of hunger and malnutrition.

Discontent fueled by failed pro-U.S. policies

In recent months there have been several attacks directed against Western

targets and the Israeli embassy. Since December 2007, tourism has decreased significantly in the aftermath of a string of attacks, including the murder of four French nationals. Critics of the government inside Mauritania have become more vocal over the character and direction of both domestic and foreign policy.

Taking into consideration the increasingly precarious security situation in Mauritania, the Lisbon-Dakar race-car rally that was scheduled to be held in the country in January was cancelled. Despite the U.S. government claim that it is suspending aid to Mauritania, it is highly unlikely that this suspension will place a damper on Washington's efforts to influence events in the country and throughout North Africa.

Mauritania, like many other African nations, is considered poor and underdeveloped. Nonetheless, there is constant speculation and exploration for natural resources. The country's economy historically has been based on agricultural production and fishing in an increasingly arid landscape.

Since 2006, however, there have been plans underway to exploit the vast offshore oil and natural gas reserves. In addition, the Chinguetti and Tiof fields are expected to produce millions of barrels of oil in the near future. Consequently, this is an important area for the strategic designs of the ruling class in the U.S.

Considering the overall aims of the imperialist nations, Mauritania will feature more prominently in the machinations of successive Western bourgeois governments, with Washington taking the lead. Although the oil and natural gas corporations are plotting to make Mauritania a significant base for their long-term objectives of securing global domination, the people in this country and throughout region will continue to seek avenues of resistance to the mounting interference in their internal affairs.

□

Victory for solidarity with immigrant rights

By Peter Goselin
Hartford, Conn.

The Hartford City Council unanimously voted to adopt an ordinance on Aug. 11 that effectively removes Connecticut's capital city from the business of enforcing federal immigration laws. Mayor Eddie Perez must still sign the ordinance, but the vote is an enormous step forward for the immigrant rights movement in Connecticut.

The new law has several parts.

First, it affirms that all city services are available to all city residents, regardless of immigration status. Second, it bars any city employees from inquiring about a person's immigration status and treats immigration status, like other forms of personal information, as confidential information that city employees cannot disclose—including to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Third, it bars Hartford police officers from asking witnesses to or victims of crime about their immigration status. Fourth, it affirms that the Hartford police will not detain a person based on either immigration status or the existence of an ICE administrative warrant.

The ordinance was developed by the Hartford Immigrant Rights Coalition and introduced by Councilperson Luis Cotto, who was elected last November as a Working Families Party candidate. At a public hearing in July, nearly 150 people turned out to support the ordinance, with no less than 48 speakers making favorable comments. Not a single person spoke in opposition.

In the final minutes of discussion at the Aug. 11 meeting, Councilperson Pedro Segarra commented on the earlier hearing. Recognizing the diversity of the people who spoke out in favor of making Hartford an immigrant-friendly city and referring to the city's official slogan, "Hartford—New England's Rising Star," Segarra remarked that if Hartford's communities could come together around other issues the way that they did on the immigrant rights ordinance, "then we really would be on the way to being the rising star of New England."

The council meeting was a lesson in

just that kind of solidarity. A majority of the people packed into the sweltering City Council chambers were there to demand that the city reopen two branches of the Hartford Public Library that had recently been shut down due to funding issues as well as to support the immigration ordinance. Residents and grassroots activists from both HIRC and the North Hartford Coalition applauded each others speakers and, while the immigrant rights ordinance was being discussed and debated, community activists worked with council members to hammer out a resolution that would reopen the Blue Hills and Mark Twain library branches.

Both victories came at the conclusion of a meeting that had lasted for more than four hours. Near the end of the meeting, Councilperson Cotto held up copies of both the library resolution and the immigration ordinance, stating, "It's important for people to understand that we got this"—holding up a copy of the library resolution—"in part because we took the time to do this"—holding up the immigration ordinance.

Peter Goselin is the coordinator of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, a national network of human rights lawyers, law students, legal workers and jailhouse lawyers.

MUNDO OBRERO

Exportando el fruto de explotación

Continúa de página 12

Esplendor y La Fragancia, han luchado por el derecho a tener un sindicato. Forzada a reconocer el sindicato, la Dole resistió los esfuerzos de negociar un contrato y finalmente cerró la plantación Esplendor el año pasado.

A pesar de esto, en enero la Dole anunció que había recibido una certificación Florverde porque produce flores "cumpliendo con los estándares ambientales, sociales, y de salud y seguridad ocupacional y laboral".

Trece líderes nacionales religiosos de los EEUU enviaron una carta el pasado 12 de febrero a la Dole Fresh Flowers, señalando

la historia anti sindical de Dole y pidiendo que trate justamente a l@s trabajador@s de su plantación La Fragancia. A pesar de los profundos temores por las represalias, casi la mitad de l@s trabajador@s allí son miembr@s del sindicato Untrafragancia, una afiliada del sindicato a nivel industrial Untraflores.

El propuesto Acuerdo de Libre Comercio entre los EEUU y Colombia mantendrá las exenciones de aranceles ya en vigor para la industria de flores de Colombia. No tiene ninguna provisión para que los salarios sean más altos o las condiciones sean mejores para l@s trabajador@s de la industria. □

Reject recall of leaders

Bolivians vote to continue progressive reforms

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

With shouts of “Jallalah Evo” and “Jallalah Bolivia,” which roughly translate to “We will continue in the struggle,” thousands of exhilarated Bolivians celebrated their triumph over a recall referendum on Aug. 10. They gathered in Plaza Murillo facing Palacio Quemado, the presidential palace, awaiting their president, Evo Morales, after defeating the recall by a wide margin.

Recall referendums are usually demanded by the opposition. This one in Bolivia, on the contrary, was proposed by Morales himself to confront attempts by the opposition to make his administration ungovernable. Morales is the first Indigenous person to be president of Bolivia, after being democratically elected in this predominantly Indigenous country in 2006.

The opposition, led by a thoroughly fascist, wealthy white business elite allied to U.S. corporate interests, has tried to obstruct every new project of the Morales administration that would help lift up the living standards of the majority—Indigenous, peasants and urban poor.

This obstruction includes resistance by the opposition to ratifying a new Constitution approved last December by the Constituent Assembly. The Constitution sets forth a new path for the country, away from the neoliberalism that has made Bolivia, a country with great natural wealth, one of the poorest in Latin America, forcing many of its people to emigrate. The new Constitution is a direct challenge to the interests of the wealthy capitalists who predominate in the four departments of the Media Luna—the eastern region of the country where wealth from the exploitation of natural gas has made it the hub of Bolivia’s industry.

The referendum put to a vote the recall of the president, vice president and governors of eight of Bolivia’s nine departments. Since this type of referendum can only be used after the first half of one’s term, one recently elected governor was not included.

Initial results

As of the morning of Aug. 12, the National Electoral Tribunal reported that, with 83.56 percent of the ballots counted, an outstanding 65 percent of voters had responded positively to the referendum question, “Do you agree with the continuation of the process of change led by President Evo Morales Ayma and Vice President Álvaro García Linera?” This is far more than the 53.7 percent of voters who elected Morales president in 2005. Even in regions dominated by the opposition, the percent of votes supporting Morales increased over the 2005 elections.

Some governors on both sides were recalled: two from the opposition in La Paz and Cochabamba departments; one from Morales’s party, MAS, in Oruro. The opposition kept its hold on the departments in the Media Luna. MAS remained in charge of Potosí.

Progress under Morales

The numbers behind the ratification of Morales speak volumes about the will of the majority of Bolivians to increase the process of nationalizing their natural resources and services and taking

back their destiny from the hands of the capitalists.

In just two and a half years in office, and in spite of opposition violence against him and his supporters, President Morales has been able to show concrete results. Bolivia’s international currency reserves have more than doubled; revenues from the sale of natural gas have served to begin social programs, including a pension for people age 60 and older. With the assistance of Cuba and Venezuela, more than half a million people have become literate and one million have received free health care.

In an article widely circulated on the Internet, Venezuelan writer Luis Britto García, who recently visited Bolivia, quoted Morales: “Thanks to the income of the nationalized gas industry, in little over two years urban unemployment has decreased from 8.15 percent to 7.66 percent; the minimum salary has increased from 440 bolivianos to 577.7; the foreign debt decreased from \$4.94 to \$2.9 billion. For the first time in decades, there is no fiscal deficit. And we add that the president, vice president, parliamentarians and ministers have lowered their salaries and increased those of the health workers, teachers and workers in general.”

Fascist opposition and its Yanki backers

Bolivia is central to the plans of Wall Street and Washington to regain U.S. dominance in Latin America, which is steadily being eroded by the massive anti-imperialist movements in the region. Secession is the strategy for Bolivia, but it is also contemplated against Venezuela and Ecuador. With a racist, arrogant imperialist perspective, the White House views Evo Morales’s administration as an easy target to start implementing its secessionist plans for the area.

The U.S., under cover of the National Endowment for Democracy and the U.S. Agency for International Development, among others, has sent funds and experts in counter-revolution to work with the Bolivian oligarchy to try to destabilize the



Supporters of Bolivia's Evo Morales celebrate during a rally in La Paz, Aug. 10.

government and increase the strength of the secessionist movement. U.S. Ambassador Philip Goldberg is in the thick of it with directives to promote the division of the country, just as he did in the former Yugoslavia, where he worked in the U.S. Embassy during the mid 1990s.

The fascist oligarchy has at its disposal a paramilitary grouping of youth called Cruceñista Youth Union who, on the day of the referendum, went armed with bats in poor neighborhoods in Santa Cruz that are strongly pro-Morales, threatening voters. They were transported in minibuses of the Gabriel René Moreno University. These youth have committed many acts of racist violence against the poor and Indigenous who live in the Media Luna departments.

Another violent group, the Civic Committee of San Ignacio de Velasco in Santa Cruz, threatened a group of Cuban doctors in La Paz, forcing their way into the doctors’ house.

The opposition in general tried their hardest to prevent this referendum. Their tactics ranged from hunger strikes to the violent takeover of public institutions and actions in front of the Tarija airport on

the day Argentinean President Cristina Fernández and Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez were scheduled to visit Bolivia, forcing both of them to cancel their trips.

Latin American solidarity

All over Latin America, however, there is much solidarity for the “Democratic and Cultural Revolution,” as the Bolivian Revolution is called. Latin American progressives closely followed the referendum, concerned most of all with U.S. interference in Bolivia and the entire region.

In Caracas, Venezuela, several demonstrations supported Morales and the Indigenous revolution, and there were constant vigils in front of the Bolivian Embassy. In Argentina thousands of Bolivian immigrants organized a mock election where they ratified Morales and recalled all the opposition governors. The vote by Bolivians outside the country is not recognized by Bolivia’s Electoral Law. The group, however, stated it will send the ballots to the National Electoral Tribunal in Bolivia and to the legislators.

In Bolivia itself the Network of Intellectuals in Defense of Humanity held an event called “Gathering of Intellectuals for the Unity and Sovereignty of Bolivia,” attended by well-known figures like Ernesto Cardenal, Ramsey Clark, Frei Betto and Michel Collon, among others.

Evo’s message: ‘Homeland or death—We will win!’

The referendum gives even greater legality to the Morales presidency and the reforms he is advancing. However, the opposition is still strong, particularly with the growing support of the U.S. government. But Morales, loyal to this new mandate from the people, has vowed to intensify the nationalizations and “recover the natural resources.”

Speaking to the crowd on the night of the vote, he pledged to move the new Constitution forward and strengthen the unity of Bolivians. The masses yelled, “Mano dura,” meaning take a hard line with the opposition. He dedicated the triumph to the Bolivian people but also to “all the revolutionaries of Latin America and the world.”

Morales finished his speech with the cry, “¡Que viva Bolivia unida!” (Long live a united Bolivia!) “¡Patria o muerte!” (Homeland or death!) The masses responded, “¡Venceremos!” (We will win!)

Victor Toro in court

By LeiLani Dowell

On July 6, 2007, Víctor Toro was arrested by the U.S. Border Patrol while aboard an Amtrak train in Rochester, N.Y. As an undocumented worker in the U.S., Toro is now in danger of being deported back to Chile.

Toro is a Chilean citizen and national and was jailed and tortured in the early 1970s because of his opposition to the right-wing government of dictator Augusto Pinochet. Toro was a founder and leader of the MIR (Revolutionary Left Movement), a people’s organization that led many militant struggles for workers and peasants in Chile.



Toro’s supporters and legal counsel are calling for political asylum. If Toro is deported back to Chile, his life will be in real danger.

Since his arrival in New York, Toro has been a dedicated activist here against war and racism, and for workers and immigrant rights and all progressive causes.

Come to Federal Court, 26 Federal Plaza at the corner of Worth and Lafayette, on Friday, Aug. 15 at 9:00 a.m. Join us in a picket to demand political asylum for Toro. □



U.S. imperialism & Caspian oil

The U.S. media’s war reporting on Georgia’s invasion of South Ossetia has echoed the kind of lies and misinformation that characterized the reporting on the U.S. invasion of Iraq. The war reports are little more than Pentagon propaganda pieces.

To understand what is happening and why, there’s no chance if your only source is the U.S. big-business-controlled media. Yet Georgia is at the center of U.S. imperialism’s moves to control the oil-rich Caspian Sea region. Georgia is the energy highway for Europe, with at least two major pipelines passing through it. These pipelines are emerging to rival the Russian oil pipelines that have been Europe’s primary source for natural gas and oil.

Until 2005, the only pipeline from the Caspian oil center of Baku in Azerbaijan was through Russia. In 2005, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline opened. Owned by British Petroleum and Unocal, this pipeline goes through Georgia to the Turkish port city of Ceyhan. The BP consortium also owns the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipeline, which opened in 2007. Another pipeline, named Western Early, goes through Georgia passing the border of South Ossetia to the Georgia port city of Supsa.

Thus the oil that was once the most valuable resource of the former Soviet Union is now going to market through facilities controlled by U.S. imperialism and its allies.

With Iraq’s oil resources conquered, and Iran’s under threat of blockade or bombardment, the U.S. is determined to also control the Caspian oil fields.

By removing Russian control over these oil fields, the U.S. would deliver a major blow to the possible emergence of Russia as a capitalist power.

For all its flowery words of democracy and freedom, the U.S. ruling class has no intention of allowing Russia to

become an imperialist rival, like Europe and Japan. The U.S. has been working covertly and overtly to break up Russia and the states that were formerly part of the Soviet Union, concentrating on the states around the Caspian oil fields.

The Caspian Sea has two huge oil fields. One is east of Baku. The other is the Tengiz oilfield, on the Caspian’s northwest shore in Kazakhstan.

In addition there are massive reserves of natural gas throughout the Caspian region. It is the primary supplier of natural gas to Europe.

The known reserves of Caspian oil are larger than the oil fields of Nigeria or Libya, putting the Caspian oil fields in the same league as the fields of Iran or Kuwait.

Following the victory of the Russian Revolution of 1917, the oil-producing countries of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan became republics within the Soviet Union. Their oil was a key resource for the creation of the world’s first socialist economy.

With the overthrow of socialism, U.S. imperialism went into high gear targeting this oil-rich region.

A consortium of 11 major oil corporations set up outposts on the Caspian. Atlantic Richfield, Chevron, Exxon, Mobil, Pennzoil, Philips Petroleum, Texaco and BP Amoco spent billions of dollars buying up Soviet-era oil interests and drilling rights.

But the Caspian Sea is landlocked. The oil must be transported out of the region by pipeline. Whoever controls the pipelines will ultimately control the oil. South Ossetia and Abkhazian, both targets of the U.S.-trained and directed Georgian military’s invasion, are very much in this target zone. The people there are suffering at the hands of U.S. imperialism’s proxy army. All of humanity must demand: U.S. imperialism get out. □

Georgians denounce Saakashvili regime’s aggression

Workers World received this statement from the Georgian Peace Committee, a member of the World Peace Council, through other committees associated with the council. We believe our readers should have the opportunity to read this point of view.

Declaration of the Georgian Peace Committee

Once more Georgia was launched into a situation of chaos and bloodshed. A new fratricidal war exploded with renewed strength on Georgian soil.

To our great disappointment, the alerts of the Georgian Peace Committee and of progressive personalities of Georgia on the pernicious character of the militarization of the country and on the danger of a pro-fascist and nationalist policy had no effect.

The authorities of Georgia once again organized a bloody war, feeling the support of some Western countries and of regional and international organizations. It will take decades to cleanse the shame poured by the current holders of the power over the Georgian people.

The Georgian army—armed and trained by U.S. instructors and using also U.S. armaments—subjected the city of Tskhinvali to a barbaric destruction. The bombings killed Ossetian civilians, our brothers and sisters, children, women and elderly people. Over 2,000 inhabitants of Tskhinvali and of its surroundings died.

Hundreds of civilians of Georgian nationality also died, both in the conflict zone as well as in the entire territory of Georgia.

The Georgian Peace Committee expresses its deep condolences to the relatives and friends of those who have perished.

The entire responsibility for this fratricidal war, for thousands of children, women and elderly dead people, for the inhabitants of South Ossetia and of Georgia falls exclusively on the current president, on the Parliament and on the government of Georgia. The irresponsibility and the adventurism of the Saakashvili regime have no limits. There is no doubt the president of Georgia and his team are criminals and must be held responsible.

The Georgian Peace Committee, together with all the progressive parties and social movements of Georgia, will struggle to assure that the organizers of this monstrous genocide have a severe and legitimate punishment.

The Georgian Peace Committee declares and asks broad public opinion not to identify the current Georgian leadership with the people of Georgia, with the Georgian nation, and appeals to all to support the Georgian people in the struggle against the criminal regime of Saakashvili.

We appeal to all the political forces of Georgia, the social movements and the people of Georgia to unite in order to free the country from the Russian-phobic and pro-fascist anti-popular regime of Saakashvili!

The Georgian Peace Committee
Tbilisi, Aug. 11, 2008

Unofficial translation by the Portuguese Peace Council, which was then edited by WW.

U.S. hidden hand pushes Ossetia war

Continued from page 1

deep popular opposition in Poland and the Czech Republic, the U.S. military also pushed ahead with a plan to place a U.S. anti-missile system in each of these two countries, raising another threat to Russia.

At the Bucharest meeting, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg strongly and openly opposed Bush’s demands to include Ukraine and Georgia in NATO. Some of these governments said they felt apprehensive about U.S. recognition of Kosovo’s secession from Serbia. This secession was in direct violation of United Nations agreements and even the conditions the U.S. imposed on Serbia in the cease-fire agreement in 1999, which ended NATO’s terror bombing of Yugoslavia.

NATO postponed its decision on the status of Georgia and Ukraine until December. But Washington has refused to wait until the December NATO meeting. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Georgia on July 10 and strongly reiterated U.S. support for Georgia’s membership in NATO.

NATO expansion

For 40 years the NATO military alliance was comprised of wealthy, industrialized imperialist countries that had prospered from generations of colonial plunder. It was essentially an anti-Soviet alliance to halt the spread of socialist revolutions in

Europe. NATO used military might, nuclear blackmail, economic sabotage, espionage and terror to protect and expand the private corporate wealth of its members.

Using the 1992-1999 war against Yugoslavia to justify its expansion and intervention, NATO has now grown from 16 members before that war to 26 members and 38 nations in four different “partnership” arrangements, as Canadian Gen. Ray Henault of the NATO Military Committee boasted in his Chairman’s Report in April. NATO has spread its field of intervention far beyond its original North Atlantic area to Eastern Europe, Africa and Afghanistan.

Many of the new members and “partners” of this military bloc are former socialist countries from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union that have become captured ministates—economic colonies of European and U.S. imperialism.

However, the reestablishment of capitalist private ownership over the resources and production of this vast region of the globe did not pacify U.S. imperialism, which sees competing capitalist development in Russia also as a threat. U.S. corporate power is determined to allow only dependent colonial subjects. Any country seeking to control its own development or resources, regardless of its social system, is targeted. This is as true for Russia as it is for Iran, China or Venezuela.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union,

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A victory and a challenge

China and the Olympic games

By Fred Goldstein

We reprint below, as part of our archival series celebrating Workers World's 50th year of publication, excerpts from an article that first appeared in the July 26, 2001, issue. It is especially appropriate in the week following the opening of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, where the opening ceremony, broadcast to billions of people all over the world, was such a stunning demonstration of the technological development of the Peoples Republic of China, something that would not have been possible without the tremendous revolution of 1949 led by the Chinese Communist Party.

The awarding of the 2008 Summer Olympics to the People's Republic of China represents a victory for the Chinese people made possible only by their 1949 revolution. At the same time, this victory has evoked the fundamental hostility of imperialism to China as a socialist country, demonstrating the dangers and contradictions inherent in the policy of "opening up" to the capitalist world powers.

This victory, grudgingly acceded to by Washington and the capitals of Western Europe, is a source of great national pride for China, which was an oppressed country just half a century ago. It was one of the poorest countries in the world after enduring more than a century of the most degrading colonial plunder and humiliation, from the 1840 Opium War to the Japanese occupation that ended in 1945.

The People's Liberation Army, led by the Chinese Communist Party, ended this plunder by driving the U.S.-backed forces of Chiang Kai-shek off the mainland to Taiwan, where they set up a haven for the defeated landlords and capitalists under the protection of the U.S. Seventh Fleet.

On Oct. 1, 1949, Mao [Zedong] declared that "China has stood up," and the Chinese Revolution proceeded to expropriate the landlords and big capitalists and set up a socialist regime. China became a sovereign, independent country, free of imperialist domination for the first time in over 100 years.

The Chinese leadership has made major concessions to imperialist corporations

and domestic capitalism, and has abandoned an internationalist, anti-imperialist foreign policy in recent years. But China is still an independent, sovereign, socialist country capable of resisting imperialism. For the ruling classes of the world, it is a galling prospect to have to turn over the Olympic stage to a government born of anti-imperialist revolution.

The Chinese government, ever since taking power, has shown its ability to undertake vast projects when the situation called for them.

Beijing quickly won the majority in the second-round vote at the International Olympic Committee balloting in Moscow with 56 votes, against 49 for the three other candidates combined. Although the vote is by secret ballot, China "appeared to receive broad international support," according to the New York Times of July 14 [2001].

"When the European Parliament and some members of the United States Congress called for the Games to be sent elsewhere," continued the Times of July 14 [2001], "the political maneuvering backfired, and Beijing instead may have picked up another 10 votes from IOC delegates, said Mario Pescante, an Italian member."

Just days before the vote, the Bush administration had let it be known that it would not try to block China, as Washington had done in 1993. At that time the PRC lost by two votes to Australia. The momentum for Beijing has been building for months. Washington decided that it was the better part of wisdom to go with the flow.

Anti-China invective began even before vote

Even before the actual selection of Beijing, when it was clear that China was going to win, the capitalist press began a steady stream of anti-China invective and threats. A Washington Post editorial on July 8 [2001] suggested that the 2008 Olympics could become comparable to the 1936 Olympics staged by the Nazis and Hitler in Berlin.

A New York Times editorial of July 12 [2001] gave voice to the ruling class when it declared that the IOC should let China

know that "its handling of every aspect of the games—including construction of new Olympic arenas, the treatment of foreign visitors and reporters, and the political climate in which the games are held—will be closely monitored by the world."

It continued, "The IOC and the world at large should make clear that granting the Olympics to China is not meant as a reward." The "liberal" New York Times gave the outlines of the anti-China campaign being hatched in editorial rooms of the big business media.

"The Olympic authorities must insist that no journalists, athletes or spectators seeking to attend the Games be denied entry to China, or find their activities once there restricted, even if their political views are abhorrent to the Chinese government. International media should have unrestricted access in covering preparation for the Games and all areas of Chinese life [!] during the Olympics, including human rights and China's criminal justice system."

"Olympic officials," continued the Times, "must also insist on the right to monitor labor practices at Olympic construction sites, as well as to oversee security measures leading up to the Games." As if the Times had ever shown genuine concern for workers in the U.S.!

The paper even threatened a boycott before the voting took place.

This is the rabid colonialist, anti-communist attitude that lurks beneath all the sugar-coated language of imperialist diplomacy. The Times is only one step away from calling for the old-style extra-territoriality of the "Open Door" policy, when colonial powers trampled on China's sovereignty at will.

All this is demanded in the name of "human rights." But this is imperialist terminology, used as a smokescreen. Humanity does not exist in the abstract. It is divided into classes, into oppressors and oppressed. The social and political rights of those who fight on behalf of the exploiters and oppressors of the working class have to be curtailed. Of course, this must not be abused and must be done within the strict framework of socialist legality, with an emphasis on political methods and the mobilization of the working class. Repression should be a last resort.

If the PRC is engaged in a campaign against corrupt or counter-revolutionary elements who want to restore full-scale capitalism and imperialism to China, whether under the guise of defending democracy, human rights, religious mysticism or any other pretext, it has the right to do so. The question of the effectiveness of the methods is another matter. But imperialism has no right to tell China to let its enemies organize with impunity.

Unfortunately some of the Chinese sports officials and advocates gave credence to this imperialist arrogance by promising to "improve" the "human rights" situation in China. It would be more to the point to demand that the Chinese or any other progressive government be allowed to send its media and observers into the U.S. to examine the plight of the working class and all Black, Latino, Arab, Asian and Native people.

They could start by visiting Mumia Abu-Jamal, the internationally recognized journalist and political prisoner on death row. Then they could move on to the two million other poor people incarcerated in the dungeons of the U.S. They could note that one-fourth of all Black males in the U.S. are under the jurisdiction of the "criminal justice" system.

They could investigate the plight of millions of women and children living in poverty in the richest country on earth. They could investigate the arson against abortion clinics, including the one just burned down in Baton Rouge, La. They could investigate the brutal violence and daily discrimination against lesbian, gay, trans and bi people.

Let the Chinese monitor the U.S. sweatshops that exist from coast to coast, many filled with undocumented workers with no rights at all. Let it be shown that only 13 million of the 140 million workers in this country have a union. It would be apropos of human rights to point out that 43 million poor and working people have no health care in the U.S.

There is no end to the violations of "human rights" of the workers and oppressed in this, the richest of all capitalist "paradises."

Only the strength of the Chinese Revolution has forced the imperialists to deal with the PRC. □

Continued from page 10

U.S. corporate power has attempted to establish control over the vast energy resources of Central Asia and the nations of the Caucasus region, the Caspian Sea and Black Sea.

Through NATO's military expansion, the Pentagon has sought to encircle Russia. Again and again U.S. corporations have used Washington's intelligence agencies and U.S.-based, corporate-funded nongovernmental organizations to cynically manipulate national antagonisms, tensions and claims throughout Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the former Soviet Republics.

Ossetia's status

For 70 years South Ossetia, though bordered on three sides by Georgia, held the status of an Autonomous Oblast (Region) within the Soviet Federation. Its population is 70,000. The neighboring Republic of North Ossetia-Alania has maintained its status as an autonomous republic within the present-day Russian Federation. The Ossetians have a distinct Persian-related language and culture. Schools, publishing houses and theaters

helped preserve Ossetian nationality within the Soviet Union.

With the collapse of socialist planning in the Soviet Union, socialist solidarity among its constituent nations broke down. The capitalist market brought chaos and upheaval that hit hardest at the many small nationalities as the Soviet Union ended. Contending gangs of privatizers seeking to grab hold of nationally owned property fueled and manipulated nationalist sentiment.

The reactionary, pro-capitalist leadership in Georgia suddenly abolished South Ossetia's autonomous status and rights and annexed the small nation, as they did with Abkhazia, another small, autonomous nation strategically located on the

Black Sea and surrounded by Georgia. In the resulting struggle, South Ossetia and Abkhazia each declared their independence from Georgia in 1991.

This led to a 17-year standoff, with both Georgian and Russian "peacekeepers" stationed in South Ossetia. The latest Georgian attack ended the standoff with a de facto attempt at annexation.

Abkhazia has similarly declared its independence from Georgia. Georgia's military onslaught against South Ossetia could well have spilled over into an attack on Abkhazia.

Given the scope of the operation and the active influence of U.S. forces in Georgia, it is hard to believe that Washington could have been uninformed of Saakashvili's

decision to launch an all-out war against South Ossetia.

Within the United Nations Security Council, U.S. and British representatives blocked a Russian-drafted resolution calling on Georgia and South Ossetia to immediately put down their weapons. The U.S. rejected the three-sentence statement that would have required both sides "to renounce the use of force." It was a clear confirmation of U.S. support for Georgia's continued "use of force" against the small Ossetian nationality.

However, Russia succeeded in repelling Georgia's invasion of South Ossetia. So as of Aug. 13, Georgia and Russia agreed to a "peace plan" brokered by French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

Saakashvili is already criticizing the West generally, and the Bush administration in particular, for not coming to his aid—indicating that this puppet of Washington, who spent his time as a New York lawyer before being set up as a politician in post-Soviet Georgia, may believe he had the go-ahead from his imperialist masters to carry out a reckless attack on both Russians and Ossetians in the small autonomous region. □

MARKET ELECTIONS How Democracy Serves the Rich

By Vince Copeland

Every four years, big money chooses the presidential candidates. Their war chests filled to the brim, they are then packaged by the media as 'the people's choice.'

It's U.S.-style democracy—of the rich, by the rich and for the rich. But how do these chosen politicians win the votes of the millions as well as the millionaires? In this fascinating tour through the history of U.S. presidential elections, Vince Copeland explains the devious art of capitalist politics. And he shows how mass movements can upset even the best-laid plans of the 'king-makers.'

Who has been excluded from voting? How were electoral politics used to betray Black freedom after the Civil War?

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Exportando el fruto de explotación masiva

Por **Betsey Piette**
Bogotá, Colombia

Desde la rosa de Shakespeare en “Romeo y Julieta” a los girasoles de Van Gogh, las flores han sido algo íntegro en muchas culturas, marcando los ritos del paso desde el nacimiento hasta la muerte.

Sin embargo, déjese esto a la avaricia capitalista para que torne algo tan bello y lleno ternura en una oportunidad para sacar súper ganancias. Para miles de mujeres trabajadoras en la industria de las flores en Colombia, las flores no son tanto un símbolo de amor sino una fuente de explotación masiva.

Colombia, Ecuador, Kenia y Holanda cultivan el 83 por ciento de las flores en todo el mundo, pero el 85 por ciento del cultivo de Colombia—con un costo de \$870 millones anuales—es exportado a los Estados Unidos. Más de 800.000 trabajador@s colombian@s dependen de la industria de las flores, estando 100.000 directamente emplead@s y el resto temporer@s. El 70 por ciento de los trabajadores son mujeres. La mayoría no tienen seguridad de empleo y a menudo son despedidas si intentan organizar un sindicato. Casi tod@s trabajan bajo contratos temporeros que a menudo son sólo verbales.

Después de asistir al Tribunal Permanente de los Pueblos en Bogotá del 21 al 23 de julio, una delegación de Estados Unidos tuvo la oportunidad de reunirse con mujeres trabajadoras en la industria de las flores en Madrid, región de la Sabana en el lado oriental de Bogotá donde comenzó la industria.

Anteriormente esta región la ocupaban pequeñas fincas que suplían productos agrícolas y carne a los pueblos cercanos al igual que a Bogotá, pero para la década de los sesenta ya empresas familiares comenzaron a producir rosas, pompones,

claveles y alstroemerias. Para el 1995 las exportaciones ascendieron a \$475 millones.

En 1998 la gigantesca multinacional Dole Foods entró en el negocio comprando Flores Esplendor. La compañía se convirtió en una de las más grandes de América Latina, con más de 2.500 trabajador@s. Esto cambió la industria; el cultivo de las flores se extendió por todo el área.

La delegación, organizada por el Centro de Acción Internacional y el Intercambio Sindical EEUU/Cuba, se reunió con cinco trabajadoras en un centro infantil, donde cuidan a sus criaturas. Fue construido por trabajadoras de las flores que pagan 5.000 pesos de matrícula al mes—equivalente aproximadamente a \$2,50 dólares. Los salarios de estas mujeres son de casi \$350 dólares por año. El promedio de salarios en la industria es de menos de \$2 dólares por día.

De las cinco trabajadoras que conocimos, sólo una, Alba, estaba trabajando. Muchas han sido despedidas por la disminución en la demanda de las flores, cosa que los dueños culpan la devaluación del dólar como causante.

Alba, madre de cuatro niños, se levanta a las 4:30 a.m. para poder vestir y alimentar a sus niños y llevarlos a tiempo al centro infantil. Después toma un autobús para comenzar su trabajo en el turno de las 6:30 a.m. a 3:30 p.m. Durante las temporadas especiales como el Día de San Valentín y el Día de las Madres, Alba trabaja hasta 15 horas por día, regresando a su hogar cerca de las 10:30 p.m.

Durante el día, Alba está expuesta a fuertes químicos durante la preparación para la siembra, además de cortar y procesar las flores para los envíos. Un/a trabajador/a de flores en Colombia rutinariamente está expuest@ a más de 125 tóxicos, algunos de los cuales se sabe

que producen cáncer y problemas en los aparatos reproductivo, respiratorio y neurológico. L@s trabajador@s entran a los invernaderos inmediatamente después de que las flores han sido fumigadas con pesticidas, aunque la Organización Mundial de la Salud dice que no es seguro entrar por lo menos hasta 24 horas después de la fumigación.

Trabajadoras embarazadas han sufrido abortos en los campos. En vez de ofrecer protecciones contra los químicos, estas compañías que producen flores para el Día de las Madres echan de sus puestos sin aviso previo a las mujeres que quedan embarazadas.

Los tóxicos agrícolas también entran en el agua, la tierra y la comida consumida por animales que producen carne. Las vacas que se alimentan con los residuos de los claveles producen leche contaminada con pesticidas en concentraciones más altas que las permitidas por la Organización Mundial de la Salud. Las malformaciones congénitas son comunes. Un 10 por ciento de l@s 70.000 residentes de Madrid sufren de alguna forma de discapacidad física o de trastornos neurológicos.

Los invernaderos que vimos en Madrid estaban cubiertos por plástico, no tanto para mantener los niveles de humedad sino para esconder las condiciones en su interior. Las trabajadoras se quejaron de que las temperaturas excesivamente altas que resultan les dejan mareadas. Tienen dificultades como asma y presión alta después de respirar los químicos en estos lugares cerrados.

Un problema importante para las mujeres en la industria de las flores es el síndrome del túnel carpiano. Durante un día típico, una mujer puede cosechar 400 claveles. Algunas compañías demandan que se corten 350 capullos por hora. Esto se puede duplicar en las semanas antes de los principales días feriados, cuando las

flores que cosechan estas mujeres se venden hasta por \$800 un ramo en los EEUU y Europa.

Sin embargo, l@s trabajador@s no pueden variar el trabajo, como por ejemplo cortando flores, empacando o pelando los tallos. L@s trabajador@s de las flores constituyen un 32 por ciento de todos los casos del síndrome del túnel carpiano en Colombia, y un 89 de ell@s son mujeres.

Aunque dos terceras partes de l@s trabajador@s de flores de Colombia sufren de problemas de salud asociados a la exposición a pesticidas y al trabajo de movimiento repetitivo, el acceso al cuidado de salud es esporádico. Las empresas puede que paguen el seguro de salud de sus emplead@s un mes pero dejen de pagar varios meses consecutivos. Por ley, las compañías deben proporcionar los beneficios, pero saben que hay much@s trabajador@s desesperad@s por tomar un empleo temporal.

Durante las estaciones de mayor comercio, empresas como Dole emplean trabajador@s temporales proporcionad@s por las Cooperativas de Trabajo Asociado (CTA) promovidas por la ley de “Reforma Laboral” de 2002, del presidente de Colombia Álvaro Uribe. Al emplear trabajador@s temporales, se elimina la responsabilidad del empresario de hacer pagos de seguro social. Las CTA se aprovechan de los altos niveles de desempleo en Colombia, donde millones de personas desplazadas necesitan desesperadamente un ingreso.

Con ingresos de más de US\$6,2 billones, la Dole Foods, por medio de su subsidiaria Dole Fresh Flowers, permanece como uno de los suministradores más grandes de flores cortadas a los supermercados de los EEUU.

Por varios años l@s trabajador@s en dos plantaciones de la Dole en Colombia,

Continúa en página 8

Solidaridad con l@s trabajador@s colombian@s

Concejales municipales demandan que Boston esté libre de Coca-Cola

Por **Frank Neisser**

Activistas comunitari@s y sindicales se reunieron con el Concejal Municipal Chuck Turner y con miembr@s del cuerpo administrativo del “Equipo de Unidad” de Turner y de los Concejales Charles Yancey y Sam Yoon, en el Salón Piemonte del Ayuntamiento de Boston el 23 de julio donde tomaron pasos concretos de acción en solidaridad con l@s sindicalistas de Colombia, declarando que la Ciudad de Boston esté libre de Coca-Cola.

La reunión de solidaridad fue organizada para coincidir con el Tribunal Permanente de los Pueblos, el cual tuvo lugar del 21 al 23 de julio en Bogotá, Colombia. El TPP examinó testimonio sobre los crímenes de corporaciones multinacionales como la Coca-Cola, Chiquita Brands, y otras en los asesinatos de líderes sindicales en Colombia. El panel del jurado del TPP halló culpable a las corporaciones.

La reunión apoyó una resolución que Turner presentó para hacer de Boston una ciudad libre de Coca-Cola. La reso-

lución de Turner reconoce el boicot internacional de la Coca-Cola que el sindicato colombiano de trabajador@s de bebidas y alimentos SINALTRAINAL y el sindicato estadounidense United Steelworkers International han llamado, así como el apoyo de ese boicot por sindicatos locales, incluyendo el del Consejo Distrital 35 de Pintores y Oficios Relacionados y de los Choferes de Autobuses Escolares de Boston, Sucursal 8751 de la USW.

El sindicato de Pintores ha eliminado las máquinas que vendían Coca-Cola de sus edificios, y los Choferes de Autobuses Escolares han hecho que se eliminen las máquinas de Coca-Cola en todos los terminales de autobuses escolares en Boston.

La resolución concluye diciendo: “El Concejo Municipal de Boston . . . de esta manera declara que Boston, Massachusetts es una ciudad donde la Coca-Cola está prohibida y pide a la administración de la ciudad que no sirva productos de la Coca-Cola y que no los venda en ninguna máquina que esté situada en propiedad de la ciudad; y el Concejo Municipal de

Boston propone a todos los negocios a dejar inmediatamente de abastecer y vender todo producto de Coca-Cola hasta que sea resuelto el boicot internacional.”

El Obispo Filipe Teixeira, OFSJC, abrió la reunión con un llamado a la solidaridad mundial con l@strabajador@syl@spobres. Frantz Mendes, presidente de la Sucursal 8751 del USW y el presidente del Comité de Desagravios Stevan Kirschbaum, presidieron la reunión. Kirschbaum describió la misión de solidaridad de su sindicato que viajó a Colombia con propósitos de investigar y de ser testigos. Allí los sindicalistas de la delegación vieron el frente blindado del sindicato SINALTRAINAL y los carros blindados y chaquetas a prueba de bala que son necesarias para asistir a reuniones sindicales.

Al comienzo de la convención de 8.000 delegad@s del sindicato de carter@s en Boston el 18 de julio, tres funcionarios de la Asociación Nacional de Carteros (NALC) — Dave Welsh de San Francisco, Kenneth Lerch de Rockville, Md., y Richard Coritz de Carolina de Norte — se dirigieron a la



Concejal Municipal Chuck Turner

reunión del Concejo Municipal expresando su solidaridad. Estos delegados pasaron volantes a toda la convención de NALC llamando al apoyo para la reunión de solidaridad en el Concejo Municipal, y colaboraron trayendo una resolución en la convención en apoyo al boicot de Coca-Cola y la eliminación de máquinas vendedoras de Coca-Cola.

La reunión, organizada por el Comité de Solidaridad Comunidad y Sindicatos del Centro de Acción Internacional de Boston y la Sucursal 8751 de la USW, también oyó al activista colombiano Darío Zapata, al organizador Tony Hernández del Sindicato de Pintores, y a Richard Krushnik de la Coalición Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Boston quien habló sobre un viaje de investigación que expuso la explotación a cielo abierto de las mineras en Colombia. □